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ABSTRACT

A study examined the involvement of the private sector in vocational and technical education at the local level in Ohio. Particular attention was paid to the involvement of business and industry in the career-oriented programs of secondary schools and two-year community and technical colleges. The following forms of involvement were identified: advisory committees, cooperative education programs, customized training, school-business partnerships, and joint planning/coordinating councils. Two programs in each of the five categories were reviewed as exemplary cases. The following general factors or conditions were identified as contributing to the effectiveness of collaboration: a strong commitment from key participants to make collaboration work; identifiable benefits of collaboration for all parties; flexibility on the part of the involved individuals and agencies; responsiveness to the needs, expectations, and limitations of each party; common expectations about what the collaboration entails and its ultimate goals; established procedures for continuous and clear communication; recognition of the contributions of the other party and some form of reciprocity; and involvement of "good people" working under "good leadership." A series of recommendations directed toward policymakers and vocational education practitioners was also developed. (Author/MN)

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BUSINESS-INDUSTRY INVOLVEMENT

IN VOCATIONAL-TECHNICAL EDUCATION AT THE LOCAL LEVEL

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Ohio Council on Vocational Education - FY 87

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FOREWORD

In Ohio and throughout the nation, educators, business leaders, and public officials are demonstrating growing interest in organized, continuous cooperative efforts between schools and the private sector. Federal vocational education legislation encourages greater involvement of the private sector with the schools as a means of improving the relevancy and quality of vocational and technical programs. Although vocational and technical schools have special reasons for nurturing ties with business, the thrust for more cooperation extends to other schools as well.

The Ohio Council on Vocational Education recognized a need for describing the nature of successful private sector involvements with vocational and technical education and for sharing this information within the state. To meet this need the Council commissioned a study by Richard and Karen Dawson.

This report on the Dawson study portrays private sector involvement in secondary and postsecondary vocational and technical education in Ohio. The focus is business-industry involvement in career-oriented programs at secondary schools and two-year community and technical colleges.

The study takes as <u>given</u> the desirability of private sector involvement. It addresses ways that businesses are involved in vocational and technical education. It responds to such questions as: How and why do they get involved? What factors make cooperative efforts work? What are the barriers to good school-business relationships? Exemplary school-business partnerships are described briefly, and recommendations are presented for enhancing private sector involvement in vocational and technical education programs in Ohio.

Joseph L. Davis
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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This study examined involvement of the private sector in vocational and technical education at the local level in Ohio. The study focused on the involvement of business and industry in the career-oriented programs of secondary schools and two-year community and technical colleges.

Five forms of such involvement were identified: advisory committees, cooperative education programs, customized training, school-business partnerships, and joint planning/coordinating councils. Two programs in each of the five types of involvement were reviewed as exemplary cases.

The following general factors or conditions were identified as contributing to the effectiveness of collaboration: (1) a strong commitment from key participants to make collaboration work; (2) identifiable benefits of collaboration for all parties; (3) flexibility on the part of involved individuals and agencies; 4) responsiveness to the needs, expectations, and limitations of each party; 5) common expectations about what is entailed in the collaboration and what is to be accomplished; (6) established procedures for continuous and clear communication; (7) recognition of the contributions of the other party and some form of reciprocity; and (8) involvement of "good people" working under "good leadership."

Barriers to effective involvement were identified as: (1) unclear or conflicting expectations; (2) focus on narrow self-interest by either party; (3) failure by either party to take the relationship seriously; (4) inability or unwillingness of school leaders to change or adapt to new conditions; and (5) "turfism" by either party.

Major recommendations, commendations, and observations emanating from the study were as follows:

- Information on Ohio school-business collaboration efforts, especially the new, more innovative ones, should be systematically collected at the state level.

- The State Department of Education (Division of Vocational and Career Education) and the Ohio Board of Regents should maintain their requirements that vocational and technical programs have community-based advisory committees.

- Co-op programs are useful components of many vocational programs, and should be encouraged and supported by state policies.

- The steps taken by the Ohio Board of Regents and the Division of Vocational and Career Education to encourage vocational and technical schools to respond to customized training opportunities are to be commended.

- School-business partnerships offer creative ways for the private sector to be involved with education, yet this is the most fragile type of involvement because it is so open-ended.

- Councils and other types of policy forums that encourage or mandate the participation of representatives from education and the private sector need strong leadership to motivate and sustain the interest of the private sector.

DESIGN OF THE STUDY

In preparing this report the authors: (1) surveyed the extensive literature on school-business relationships; (2) talked with state officials and authorities about state policies pertaining to business involvement and the extent and forms of activity in Ohio; and (3) conducted site visits to review ten exemplary instances of local school-business cooperation.

At the outset eleven state level experts were interviewed to establish a picture of private sector involvement within Ohio. These included officials at the Division of Vocational and Career Education in the Ohio Department of Education, the Ohio Board of Regents, and the Ohio Chamber of Commerce; as well as other governmental, academic, and private sector experts on education and business practices. They provided information on current state policies and school-business involvements throughout the state.

. . . five types of business involvement:

(1) advisory committees;

(2) cooperative education programs;

(3) customized training;

(4) school-business partnerships and

(5) joint planning and coordinating councils

Experts at the Ohio Board of Regents and the Ohio Division of Vocational and Career Education helped identify exemplary programs. The programs were selected to include two cases representing each of five types of business involvement: (1) advisory committees; (2) cooperative education programs; (3) customized training; (4) school-business partnerships; and, (5) joint planning and coordinating councils.

State officials were asked to identify effective programs in each of the five categories. Geographic diversity and representation from large city districts, suburban schools, small cities, and rural/small town areas were sought. The final selections include representation of vocational-technical programs at secondary institutions and two-year community and

technical colleges. The objective of looking at exemplary programs was to learn from these successful experiences what factors make for good relationships. The review of programs involved on-site visits and interviews with key business and school participants in each of ten exemplary programs. Fifty-two school and business representatives were interviewed during the examination of the ten exemplary programs.

BURGEONING INTEREST AND ACTIVITY

The review of written work and the discussions with school officials, business persons, and public officials throughout the state suggest three developments. First, there is widespread interest in expanding and improving private sector involvement in the schools. Second, the instances of business involvement in schools are increasing. Third, the involvement takes a variety of forms. Some are new, but others have existed for some time. A U. S. Department of Education study reported that in 1984 there were 46,338 "business/school relationships" in 4,000 of the nation's school districts. (Cetron, 1985, p. 85.)

True and meaningful partnerships, through formal and informal links, are needed and wanted.

Many commentators view greater private sector involvement as critical for improving education, providing better employment opportunities for American youths, and enhancing the performance of the American economy. The assistant superintendent of a large urban school system noted in one of the interviews that "young people have never before been in as much risk." He went on to argue that "real collaboration" between business and the schools is necessary to move youths into employment successfully.

The American Vocational Association, the National Alliance of Business, and the U. S. Institute for Education have called for more school-business collaboration. In their 1984 publication, "A Nation at Work: Education and the Private Sector," the National Alliance of Business and the National Advisory Council on Vocational Education state:

> True and meaningful partnerships, through formal and informal links, are needed and wanted. If education and business are to work together, their partnerships must be based on trust, respect, commitment, and a framework for cooperation. (National Alliance of Business, 1984.)

Many commentators stress the new emphasis and growing frequency of business involvement. There is, however, a long history of private sector involvement in American schools. This involvement has been especially significant in vocational and technical education. Today, there is a renewed interest in promoting school-business collaboration, and business involvement is taking on significant new forms.

There is considerable enthusiasm about greater business involvement. However, some commentators caution that successful collaboration is not easy to achieve and that many efforts at collaboration fail. That is why learning what motivates collaboration and what makes it work is so important. One business spokesperson, writing on "Why Business Finds It Hard to Work with Schools," notes:

> With all the talk about how wonderful and important public/private partnerships are, people would probably be shocked to know that most relationships between schools and businesses do not work. They are far from partnerships. They are, in fact, "near misses" . . . .
>
> There are many reasons why business finds it hard to work with schools. Many educators: (1) have little interest in working with business because it requires a new approach or extra effort; (2) have tunnel vision; (3) have unbusinesslike standards; (4) lack strong leadership skills; (5) require too much red tape; (6) lack concern or understanding of business's needs, worries, or problems; (7) expect one-way giving; (8) worry about their turf; (9) take business for granted; and, (10) fear that if business gets involved, it might do a better job, and where would that leave schools? (Jasso, 1984, p. 81.)

The problems are not one-sided. Businesses sometimes make it difficult for educators to work with them. Business people are not always sensitive to the planning, scheduling, and staff needs of the schools they work with. They expect courses to be put into place on very short notice. Sometimes they are unclear or unsure about what they want and why. They may change their minds and alter or cancel their service requests with little sensitivity to the planning and personnel investments made by the schools. Business leaders often are impatient with the planning, review, and evaluation processes that are important components of the education enterprise.

. . . successful collaboration is not easy to achieve and many efforts at collaboration fail.

The initiative for business involvement in education comes variously from the school and from business.

The initiative for business involvement in education comes variously from the school and from business. In some cases, businesses have taken the initiative in approaching

schools to offer help in curriculum development or to contract with schools for training services. In other instances, schools have taken the lead by seeking business help in updating equipment or placing students in jobs. Motivations for involvement vary by type of program. In most instances, mutual benefits can be identified. Businesses have a need for trained workers. As employers of workers trained at vocational or technical schools, they have a stake in the quality of the training. At the same time, many schools are seeking to expand their student clientele. They can benefit from the expertise and resources businesses have to offer.

The current interest in school-business collaboration has been determined in large measure by four general developments:

- A significant decrease in the number of youths.
- Rapid changes in production technologies and business procedures, which have altered the skill and training requirements of many jobs.
- The financial difficulties and criticisms about the performance of schools throughout the nation.
- Challenges posed by the economy, including relatively high unemployment, insufficient growth, and mounting trade deficits.

The shrinking youth population has caused both secondary and postsecondary institutions to look beyond the traditional youth clientele and to offer programs for adult workers interested in skill improvement or retraining. With a diminished pool of potential entry-level workers, many businesses want to become involved with schools to assure that appropriate skill training is provided.

Because of rapid and often on-going changes in manufacturing and business technologies, many businesses are confronted with the need to upgrade the skills of their workforce. Nearby vocational and technical schools are a potential supplier of needed training assistance. Some schools, motivated in part by an interest in expanding their student base and educational mission, are responding with new curricula and modes of training. Some business and education leaders believe Ohio is entering a period in which changing technologies and skill needs will require on-going retraining of large numbers of workers.

School-business collaboration also is advocated to address the complex combination of skill shortages and long term unemployment. Richard E. Clinton, Director of Human Resource Planning for Tenneco, Inc., states the issues:

> One certain way that business organizations can help alleviate critical skills shortages and address the massive problem of unemployment is by promoting greater collaboration nationwide between education and training institutions and the private sector. A major focus of the effort should be on correcting the basic skills deficiencies of youth seeking employment to make them more trainable for today's and tomorrow's jobs. The efforts also must focus on retraining the millions of displaced workers who once worked in basic industries that are giving ground to increased foreign competition and who also are affected by the rapidly growing service and technology industries. (Clinton, 1984, p. 43.)

Persistent unemployment, inadequate economic growth, and burgeoning trade deficits have led officials dealing with economic development to focus on job training and employment-related education. The training/retraining of workers is seen as an essential tool in meeting changing skill requirements, combating unemployment, and increasing productivity. Enhanced cooperation between schools and businesses at the local level is recognized as one method for improving the skill levels of, and employment opportunities for, American workers.

At the national level, the Job Training Partnership Act (1982) and the Carl D. Perkins Vocational Education Act (1984) recognize a need for school-business cooperation. These Acts include provisions mandating and encouraging joint involvement. In Ohio, the Division of Vocational and Career Education and the Ohio Board of Regents are helping schools expand adult education and respond to business training needs.

FORMS OF INVOLVEMENT AND EXEMPLARY PROGRAMS

Business involvement in vocational and technical education takes many forms. Some practices have been part of vocational and technical education for many years. Other involvements represent new emphases. Study of the literature and discussions with local and state experts suggest five major types of school-business relationships:

1. Participation on school advisory committees.
2. Cooperative education programs.
3. Customized training.
4. School-business partnership programs.
5. Participation on joint planning councils.

These five categories capture the range of relationships and are useful in organizing the diversity of business involvements with schools. Two programs falling in each of the five types of participation are reviewed as exemplary cases in this study. Following are the ten programs used in the study:

1. The operation of advisory committees at a two-year technical college serving a small city and the surrounding rural areas.

2. The operation of advisory committees in a large joint vocational school, serving the suburban area around a major city.

3. The operation of cooperative education programs at a joint vocational school that serves a small city and the surrounding rural area.

4. A cooperative education program in which a vocational program in a large city school district works with a large service-industry employer to provide both classroom teaching facilities and on-the-job training.

5. An instance in which both a two-year technical college and the adult education component of a city school system in a small city have provided customized training for a plant undergoing modernization.

6. An instance in which a two-year college, which serves a heavy-manufacturing area, has established a special center to provide customized training for local businesses.

7. An instance in which a business and a vocational school in a large city school system work together on a school-business partnership.

8. An instance in another large city in which a business and a school work together in a school-business partnership.

9. An instance in which representatives from a two-year college and a joint vocational school participate with business and government representatives on a Private Industry Council that serves a rural area.

10. An instance in a large city in which schools, businesses, and public officials work together in the operation of a school-to-work transition program.

The focus is on a specific program or involvement, not on the general range of business involvement in any given school. The programs are described briefly to indicate the variety and substance of school-business involvements and to indicate what makes such collaboration work.

Advisory Committees

Vocational and technical schools have long sought private sector advice on their career-oriented programs. This involvement is institutionalized in the form of advisory committees that help develop and operate specific occupation or career programs. State regulations in Ohio require both secondary schools and two-year colleges to have an advisory committee for each vocational/technical program.

A basic rationale for advisory committees is to keep career programs relevant and up-to-date.

The general tasks of advisory committees are the review of programs and specific curricula, the assessment of job markets, and the specification of skill requirements. A basic rationale for advisory committees is to keep career programs relevant and up-to-date. Schools get "expert advice" on skills needed for specific jobs. They provide business participants an opportunity to help shape the training of potential employees.

1. Advisory Committees at a Two-year College. In this instance, college leaders have put considerable effort into achieving effective participation of private sector employers on advisory committees. Comprehensive manuals had been prepared to guide faculty members in working with such committees.

Both school officials and business participants thought the committees operated well. Business participation on these committees was seen as clearly beneficial to the school, business participants, and students. The committees afford opportunities for business people to influence the school curriculum and the training of students. The most important ingredients of successful committees were provision for business input and serious consideration by the school of that input.

Considerable attention was given to scheduling meetings and conducting them in ways to permit meaningful business input. Luncheon meetings or evening meetings were often necessary in order for business members to participate. Agendas were sent out prior to meetings to help make the most productive use of members' time. Both school and business people were sensitive to the side-benefits derived from participation on the committees. The schools could use the business contacts to help in the recruitment and placement of students. Business participants were in a position to know about and make use of other school resources.

Scheduling the meetings for the convenience of business people was one of the most difficult aspects of operating the committees. Lack of clear understanding of the purposes of the committees and the failure to take committee advice seriously were noted as major factors that tend to keep this form of business involvement from working well.

2. Advisory Committees at a Joint Vocational School. In this instance, too, there is the feeling that business participation on the advisory committees is successful. Business advice is heeded by the school, and business members have a chance to influence specific school training programs. Former graduates of the school's programs, as well as a balanced representation of relevant area employers, are included on the advisory committees. An interest in the school program by business members was noted as a factor contributing to good advisory committees. Both parties suggested that clear understanding of the purpose of the committees and well-run meetings contributed to effective business participation. It was also stressed that both parties had to have an understanding of the limitations posed by school budgets and by employer needs.

When asked what the potential barriers were in this type of involvement, participants stressed: (1) a sense that the school did not pay attention to committee advice; (2) uncertainty or lack of consensus about the purposes of committees; and (3) poorly run meetings.

Cooperative Education Programs

Cooperative education programs are joint ventures in which local employers provide part-time work experiences as an "on-the-job" training component of a vocational education curriculum. The schools provide classroom instruction featuring subject matter and skill training oriented toward a specific occupation. The employers provide paid part-time jobs and on-the-job training. Such training programs are institutionalized as part of many vocational education programs.

1. Cooperative education programs at a joint vocational school. In this case, the co-op aspects of marketing education, cooperative office education, and home nursing care programs were considered. Effective, continuous communication between the teacher-coordinator and job supervisor and a shared interest in the educational aspects of the work experience were seen as the keys to making co-op arrangements such as these work. Teachers stressed the importance of having employers view co-op work experience as student training and not just a source of cheap employees. The job supervisors felt the on-going contact and consultation with the teacher-coordinator were important.

Both parties stressed flexibility and sensitivity to the situation of the other party. The teacher-coordinators felt it important to respond to the occasional emergency work needs of the co-op employer. Business sensitivity to other educational requirements of the co-op students was stressed.

Teachers stressed the importance of having employers view co-op work experience as student training and not just a source of cheap employees.

Both school and business people mentioned that students who were poorly prepared and/or performed poorly were the major barrier to maintaining good co-op programs over time. Teacher-coordinators seemed particularly anxious about this. They also feel it important not to appear to tell employers how to run their businesses in the process of coordinating co-op work experiences.

2. A special co-op arrangement between one specific employer and a vocational program in a large city school district. In this case, an entire class of students in a vocational

course that is designed to prepare students for work in the insurance industry have co-op placements within one firm. In addition, the classroom component of the program is conducted on the business premises. The experimental program was in its third year. It had recently been transferred from a firm whose office was far removed from the center of the city to one with a more central location. Scheduling and transportation logistics had presented major difficulties at the former site.

A strong mutual commitment to make the program work and a recognition that the arrangement provides clear benefits to the school program, the company, and the students were major factors in making this program successful. Holding the classroom component on the business premises and having all the students share a common work experience provided instructional benefits. The company, always in need of good entry-level employees, liked having the entire class involved in this "trial" employment experience, and appreciated having the teacher-coordinator on the premises to help company supervisors deal with the problem situations. These arrangements facilitated good communication and the development of shared expectations, which are important in this form of school-business collaboration.

Problems in coordinating school and business scheduling needs, differing expectations on what students should be able to do, and limited availability of space were seen as potential barriers to making this particular co-op program work. There was also concern on the part of both the teacher-coordinator and the employer that some students did not have the skills to perform effectively.

Customized Training

In this form of school-business relationship, schools enter into contractual arrangements with a particular business (or group of businesses) for specialized training services. The training needs are identified by the firm and oriented specifically for that business. The training may be offered at the school or at the business site. It may involve training potential employees or retraining existing personnel. In many instances, the training is related to the introduction of a new technology or production process. Many Ohio schools, for example, have been involved in providing businesses with training in statistical process control (SPC).

School involvement in customized training for business is expanding rapidly. Given continuing innovation in technologies and pressures to improve productivity to meet worldwide competition, employee training and retraining are likely to remain an important business need. Many schools are moving to meet this need. The Ohio Division of Vocational and Career Education and the Ohio Board of Regents are seeking to improve the capability of their respective vocational and technical institutions to meet these needs. Issues of how to develop, organize, finance, and market customized training at the local level, and how customized training efforts should relate to more traditional school activities are issues of concern among local schools and state policy makers.

School involvement in customized training for business is expanding rapidly.

1. A customized training effort involving one large company and both a two-year college and a city school system. In this instance a manufacturing company, which is introducing new technologies, has contracted with a local two-year technical college and the adult vocational education component of the local city school system to help upgrade the skills of existing employees. A four-year college in the area is also under contract to provide management-level training and education.

The company effort involves a large scale modernization program and plant leaders recognize employee training as a crucial component of the effort. The initiative for this involvement came from the company. Neither of the schools had had much previous involvement in providing customized training. Nor had the company made extensive systematic use of local training resources in the past. Customized training services have been put into operation in a short period of time. Training in basic academic skills as well as in specific job skills has been introduced.

This specialized training has had important impacts on the schools involved. School officials are just beginning to understand many of the issues and tensions that result from such a rapid, large scale move in the direction of specialized training. Relationships between customized training and traditional school programs have created a number of issues for both the college and the city school system.

All parties talk about responsiveness and flexibility as key characteristics in the success of customized training collaboration. Education leaders need to understand and respond quickly to the needs of the company. Flexibility in scheduling, in curriculum development, and in budgeting and accounting, has been required to make the collaboration work. Close, continuous communication between key personnel at the company and at each of the schools has been an essential ingredient. In this instance the two schools work individually with the company and not with each other.

The collaboration is based on mutual benefits. The company has determined that its growing training needs can best be met by local educational institutions. The schools have an interest in expanding their student clientele and see customized training arrangements as a way to accomplish this.

Potential barriers to good relationships in this area might be caused by a lack of quick response in training programs to meet particular business needs. Business leaders are also skeptical about the ability of school people to deliver the type of "practical, real life" training they desire. An inability of the educational institutions, and, in some cases, the businesses, to be flexible in dealing with the other party also inhibits the success of customized training efforts.

All parties talk about responsiveness and flexibility as key characteristics in the success of customized training collaboration.

. . . collaboration is based on mutual benefits.

2. The institutionalization of customized training at a two-year college through the establishment of a special center. In this instance a two-year college, which has been a leader in working with local businesses, has established a special center to offer customized services to local industry. Services are provided through specific contractual arrangements with individual businesses. The center is part of the college but operates independently of the regular credit courses of the college. For the most part, the instructors are not drawn from among the regular faculty.

The [customized-training] center is organized to provide the flexible, individualized, practical, industry-oriented training preferred by businesses.

The center is organized to provide the flexible, individualized, practical, industry-oriented training preferred by businesses.

School officials note that school people must "listen to the business people," understand what they need, and respond to specific requirements. This is different from offering "off the shelf" courses. New courses with new approaches are required. Flexibility, "talking the same language," and delivering quality services designed to meet specific needs, were seen as important components of good working relationships with businesses.

Barriers to successful collaboration can result from an inability of the school to focus on and respond to the specific needs of individual businesses and to deliver quality services in a timely and effective manner. Organizational, educational, and procedural arrangements at the schools can impede the ability of the school to provide customized services for individual businesses. Unrealistic expectations by business people about the speed with which courses can be developed and offered by schools can also impede effective school-business cooperation. Issues such as the following need to be resolved: how to charge for services at an institution supported in large by public money; the use or non-use of regular faculty in offering customized training; how much academic credit, if any, should be awarded for which types of training; and how customized training facilities and courses relate to other components of the school. Schools and businesses have their own bureaucracies and procedures. Difficulties in getting the two systems to work together can impede effective collaboration of this type.

School-Business Partnerships

This form of school-business involvement entails the establishment of a "special relationship" between a given business and a particular school. These arrangements often are called "Adopt-a-School" or "School-Business Partnership" programs. Though the programs generally are developed and coordinated at the district level, the crucial

component is the relationship established between a particular business and a specific school or schools. The sense of identification between a business and a school is an important part of the involvement.

Businesses provide benefits for their school partner. The emphasis is on human resources rather than on monetary benefits. Company employees become involved in the school and often invite students to visit the business site. Equipment donations, business expertise, and coaching in employment-related skills are all examples of business contributions to school partners. Good school-business partnership programs tend to stress reciprocity in the relationship, with schools seeking ways to "thank" their partners. Businesses also benefit from being regarded as good citizens, involved in their community.

1. Partnership between a career center in a large city school district and a financial institution. In this situation, a career center in a large city school district has a partnership with a large local financial institution. The partnership operates as part of a district-wide school-business partnership program managed by the local chamber of commerce and the school administration. An ability to be flexible and sensitive to the needs and limitations of the other party were seen as important ingredients for making relationships like this work. Good, on-going communication and the development of common expectations were also cited as important. Benefits for the school and students centered around donations of furniture and equipment, access to business equipment, personnel, and job placements. Benefits to the business were defined as opportunities for community involvement and for influence in the training of young people.

Good school-business partnership programs tend to stress reciprocity ....

Lack of continuing communication, absence of consensus on program goals, and divergent expectations were seen as barriers to an effective partnership. A lack of continuity in personnel involved was also cited as a difficulty in making the partnership work well over time. Both parties expressed concern over inadequate communication skills of students participating in the partnership work experiences.

2. School-business partnership between a comprehensive high school/vocational school and a large retailer. Similar to the above example, this partnership is part of a district-wide program. Participants saw a strong commitment on the part of school and business leadership as crucial to making the partnership work. Processes for letting the partners get to know and understand the needs and resources of each other are important. Since the program centers around the notion of the business helping the school, it is essential that the school be open to defining its needs and receiving assistance. Needs and expectations must be clearly articulated and mutually agreeable. The fact that business participants were involved in the school beyond the partnership aspect and that the school made an effort to find ways of contributing to the business also helped this particular partnership work well.

Both parties realized benefits in the partnership. The school received donations of equipment as well as money for facilities, staff experts, assistance in teaching, and resources for business relevant curricula. The business received favorable publicity and recognition for community involvement, something important for a large retail operation. The business was located close to the school and had a steady need for new employees, many of whom could be expected to come from the school.

Lack of good communication and differing expectations about what should come from this type of partnership were cited as potential barriers. Both sides expressed concern that the relationship not be completely one-sided, with the school receiving and the business giving. Personnel changes and situations that divert time and energy away from the partnership also can interfere with an effective on-going association.

Participation in Joint Planning/Coordinating Councils

In this form of involvement, school representatives participate with business representatives — often along with representatives from labor, government, and community organizations — in planning and coordinating job-oriented education and training activities. The function of the council may be planning and goal setting, or it may entail operating programs and allocating resources. This form of involvement is increasing as policy-makers emphasize the job training and human resource components of economic development and stress the coordination and efficient use of job training resources.

National legislation on vocational education and job training emphasizes joint business, school, and government involvement in program planning and implementation. Cooperative involvement in the form of Private Industry Councils (PICs) is required under the Job Training Partnership Act (JTPA). Private Industry Councils must draw a majority of their members from the private sector, and include education, labor, and community representatives. PICs are responsible for allocating federal job training funds at the local level, under authorization of local public officials. The Private Industry Councils serve to mobilize local institutions and resources to provide job training services for the economically disadvantaged and other targeted populations.

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[PIC] brings together community interests relevant to economic development and employment training.

Joint councils take other forms and serve other purposes as well. In some communities, business and school personnel are working cooperatively on large programs to help youths make successful transitions from school to work. The "Jobs for Grads" programs found in some cities and states are an example of such an effort.

1. Participation in a Private Industry Council. In this instance, representatives from a two-year college and a joint vocational school participated in a Private Industry Council serving small towns and rural areas in a large geographic region. The service delivery area funded and carried out program decisions through four smaller sub-units. One of these sub-units was focused on, and interviews were conducted with, business and school representatives located within that sub-unit.

All parties saw the leadership exerted by the Council president and the work of the operating staff as the crucial factors making the PIC and its programs work well. The

PIC is regarded as a forum in which some common employment training and economic development issues can be discussed by educational leaders, local business leaders, and

public sector personnel. It brings together community interests relevant to economic development and employment training.

A major new ceramics program at the two-year college evolved from PIC conversations. Suggestions about the program were made by PIC members, and importantly, the PIC provided community leverage to obtain several large state and federal grants for this new educational program.

One of the major barriers cited by the PIC participants was getting sufficient involvement from private sector representatives. School officials and public officials had a clear stake in participating on the council. Schools benefited financially in providing training services. Public officials had a clear interest in how PIC funds were allocated throughout the multi-county service delivery area. Active private sector participation was more difficult to motivate and sustain. Finding time to attend meetings, dealing with program details, and learning about intricate regulations often impede effective private sector participation.

2. Participation in a School-to-Work Transition Program in a large city school district. In this case business leaders, school officials, and other public officials work together to operate a school-to-work transition program. The initiative for this program came from the local business community, whose leaders were concerned about the preparation of young people for the world of work. They adapted a nationally known model to their local situation and have worked with the schools to implement the program. The program, which was initiated and financed through private sector contributions, is controlled by a board with business, school, and public representation. A private sector representative must be chairperson and a school representative, the vice chairperson.

A strong commitment from the leadership of the largest local businesses and their financial support were crucial in getting this collaborative program started. With private sector clout and strong support from the school district leadership, they were able to overcome the skepticism and resistance of other school people. The initial success of the program and the fact that school and business people involved can see its benefits, have been important in sustaining the success of this program.

Concerns about turf and who received credit for job placements were initial barriers to the successful implementation of this program. Vocational education personnel in particular were concerned that the program would duplicate what they were doing and threaten their positions. Program leaders were able to turn some of these issues into "everyone wins" situations. Job placement opportunities were shared with other programs and joint credit-taking arrangements were worked out.

The program has moved from a program largely supported by the private sector to public funding, with most of the funds being provided by the Job Training Partnership Act. School leaders, business participants and program administrators are concerned about some of the consequences of this transition. Establishing JTPA eligibility for participating students has become a major hurdle for the program. There is also some concern about the possible slackening of business commitment as it becomes less their program and more a government program. All parties stressed that the fact that the program was business initiated was crucial to its successful start.

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

What generalizations or lessons can be drawn from this study? What factors contribute to, or inhibit, private sector involvement in vocational and technical education? Despite widespread interest in school-business collaboration, the achievement of effective cooperation is not easy. While the participants interviewed felt that their involvements were working well, they were sensitive to the fragile nature of such collaboration. The maintenance of effective collaboration over time may be more difficult than getting efforts started.

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This section summarizes what was learned about private sector involvements from these cases. First, conditions are identified that seem to facilitate effective collaboration; then, factors are outlined that inhibit cooperative relationships. Finally, some general comments are offered on the nature and future of private sector involvement in Ohio's vocational and technical education programs.

Conditions That Make Collaboration Effective

This study suggests eight general factors or conditions that contribute to effective school-business collaboration:

1. Commitment to make it work. A strong commitment from key participants to make the collaboration work may be the single most important factor in achieving effective collaboration. With this commitment, factors that interfere with good relationships can be overcome. Misunderstandings can be corrected. Scheduling and bureaucratic issues can be worked out.

2. Identifiable benefits for all parties. Neither school nor business people can be expected to engage for long in activities from which they do not recognize some benefit. The ability of both school and business people to see benefits is important for effective collaboration. For the most part, participants easily identified benefits that both they and their partners received from the cooperative involvement. Programs involving cross-sector cooperation operate best when the parties understand and appreciate the idea of mutual benefits.

3. Flexibility. "Flexibility" is the term mentioned most often when participants identified factors necessary for effective collaboration. Collaborations entail meshing organizations and people from different backgrounds. Working together requires give-and-take and an ability to adapt; often, alterations must be made on very short notice.

4. Responsiveness. "Responsiveness" was another term frequently mentioned in describing involvements that work well. School-business collaborations bring together people from two different environments. If they are to work well together, each party needs to understand and to respond to the needs and expectations of the other. Sensitivity to the limitations circumscribing each party is equally important.

5. Shared expectations. Common expectations about what is entailed in the collaboration and what is to be accomplished through it contribute to success. This factor is important in each of the five types of collaboration. Effective programs generally have processes for developing and maintaining shared expectations.

6. Effective communication. Effective communication is crucial in each type of school/business relationship. In most instances the successful programs have established procedures for the school and business participants to communicate regularly on tasks and procedures, to address difficulties, and to share information.

7. Recognition and reciprocity. Recognition of the contributions made by the other party is important for making school-business collaborations work. Sharing credit for successes and some form of reciprocating for the help provided are important in holding partnerships together. Attention to recognition and reciprocity are particularly important in school-business partnerships which are based, in large part, on business assistance to the schools.

8. Good people. Having good people involved or good leadership was commonly mentioned as a key ingredient for making a particular program successful. Good leadership is important to the success of most collaborative programs. It is probably most important in launching new programs and in maintaining programs when either collaborating party experiences personnel changes.

Barriers to Effective Involvement

1. Unclear or conflicting expectations. Not knowing what is expected in an involvement, especially when the parties harbor conflicting expectations, can impede or destroy cooperative efforts. Busy people are reluctant to devote time to efforts when it is not clear why they are there and what they are supposed to do. In many instances the will to cooperate is present, but the participants do not know what to do, or they think they are to achieve one thing and others expect something very different.

2. Focus on narrow self-interest. A concern that the other party might enter a relationship solely for a narrow exploitive objective can dampen efforts at cooperation. While participants acknowledged that the other partner should see benefit in the collaboration, many expressed apprehension about participants whose only intention was to achieve a particular selfish advantage. This could include a school asking a business representative to serve on an advisory committee solely to gain access to potential job placements, and not caring about his advice as a committee member; or the business joining a school-business partnership to receive favorable publicity, but making no efforts to become involved in the school.

3. Not taking a relationship seriously. The failure to take the involvement of the other party seriously is another barrier to effective collaboration. Schools that do not pay attention to the recommendations of advisory committees, and businesses that accept co-op students but do not take an interest in the training, are examples of this type of failure. These experiences can readily destroy cooperative efforts.

4. Inability to adapt or change. Much of the pressure for business involvement in vocational and technical education stems from a perception that private sector input and assistance are needed to help the school provide better training. Business involvement is not effective if school leaders are not receptive to change and willing to adapt to new conditions. Sometimes educators are quite reluctant to change or adapt. This

reluctance serves as a real barrier to effective participation of business people in vocational and technical education. School-business relationships are a two-way street. A business partner's willingness to adapt can also be crucial for successful collaboration.

5. Turf issues. Another factor that inhibits effective collaboration is "turfism" — the tendency of one party not to want the other to enter what it regards as its own domain. These concerns can threaten attempts at cross-group collaboration. Educators sometimes are defensive when outsiders attempt to influence classroom activities or curriculum. Business people may resent educators telling them how to run their businesses. Defensiveness about prerogatives can be a barrier in any of the types of school-business collaboration discussed.

General Observations and Conclusions

The review of exemplary programs and discussions with state-level observers offer support for the initial premise; namely, that private sector involvement with vocational and technical schools should be encouraged. Educators, business people, and policy-makers should promote collaborative efforts and help make them work. The thrust for school-business collaboration is more than a passing fad. It is driven by significant mutual needs. There are good reasons why schools and businesses should work together. The institutionalization of long-term involvements should be a concern of education and business leadership.

The thrust for school-business collaboration is more than a passing fad. It is driven by significant mutual needs.

A note of caution needs to be raised about the involvement movement. Some of the educators interviewed spoke with passion about the need of educators to adapt to business needs — to adopt the language of business, to assume the business way of doing things, to do what is necessary to meet particular businesses needs. There is a danger of school-business collaboration becoming too one-sided, of schools selling

themselves too completely to business clients. Both parties need to keep in mind that vocational and technical schools have purposes that are broader than serving the specialized needs of particular businesses. There is a danger of schools moving too far in accommodating business demands and abandoning other roles and responsibilities in the process.

The push to accommodate business interests is most apparent in customized training. This is a significant and rapidly developing area for school-business cooperation. Many schools are seeking to meet business needs in this area, and state government agencies are trying to help them. Substantial school commitments to customized training could have significant impacts on vocational and technical programs and institutions. It is important for schools and for state education agencies to learn more about the customized training activities that are taking place and what impacts they have on schools and programs. Research should be directed to understand better: the scope and types of customized training schools are involved in; how such training is carried out and financed; what is accomplished in the training; and what impact this type of business involvement is having on local schools. Research is needed on issues such as: (1) how customized training operations relate to other programs and services of the involved schools; (2) how to calculate charges for customized training; (3) defining what types of training should carry academic credit; and (4) establishing relationships between regular faculty members and those involved in customized training.

Customized training raises another educational policy issue that cannot be avoided by anyone looking into this form of school-business activity. More than any of the other involvements and types of school-business partnerships, customized training tends to put the vocational programs in competition with the two-year colleges. Customized training is directed toward adult learners. Both the vocational education programs and the technical college programs offer adult education as part of their training mission. Both are pursuing customized training arrangements with local businesses. The two systems are pressuring their respective state agencies to help them compete more effectively for this market. Some observers think this competition is good and that there is enough training business for both types of institutions. Others worry about wasted resources and the duplication of expensive equipment.

RECOMMENDATIONS

These recommendations are directed toward state education agencies and policy makers. They are based on three assumptions: (1) Private sector involvement is useful and should be encouraged; (2) The significant involvements will take place at the local level, but state bodies have important roles in encouraging and facilitating the interaction; and (3) In many instances the desire for cooperation exists, but participants need help in determining what to do together and how to do it.

1. Information on Ohio school-business collaboration efforts, especially the newer, more innovative ones, should be systematically collected at the state level. This information should serve as the basis for annual state-wide meetings to offer technical assistance, a sharing of experiences, and the publication of exemplary case studies.

2. The Division of Vocational and Career Education and the Ohio Board of Regents should maintain their requirements that vocational and technical programs have community-based advisory committees.

The success of the Advisory Committees depends a great deal on issues of recruitment, composition, scheduling; how the meetings are run; and the relationship between committee members and the relevant instructors. State agencies should undertake the following activities to help schools set up and operate advisory committees:

a. Guidelines and suggestions on organizing and operating effective advisory committees should be compiled at the state level and distributed through the Department of Education and the Board of Regents.

b. Technical assistance in this area should be offered through the state education agencies.

c. Issues on developing and operating effective advisory committees should be placed on the agenda of state educational conferences.

3. Co-op programs are useful components of many vocational programs, and should be encouraged and supported by state policies.

a. One problem undermining many co-op arrangements is the lack of appropriate skills on the part of students placed in co-op jobs. Ways should be found to screen and prepare students better before they are

placed. Vocational teachers need to work more closely with other teachers in assuring basic communication and math skills. Efforts should be made to assure that students have appropriate employability skills training before being placed in jobs.

b. Information about innovative projects, and resource materials on locating placements and preparing students, should be compiled systematically by state agencies and disseminated to teachers and school administrators involved in cooperative education programs.

4. The steps taken by the Ohio Board of Regents and the Division of Vocational and Career Education to help vocational and technical schools respond to customized training opportunities are to be commended.

a. Further efforts should be made to link and coordinate training resources throughout the state. The linkage efforts should include all adult vocational and technical programs involved in providing customized training. A goal should be to better coordinate the use of resources within geographic areas.

b. As part of the effort to expand customized training capabilities, state education agencies should provide leadership in the form of technical assistance and opportunities to share experiences through workshops and other types of conferences.

State education policy-makers need to understand better the scope and nature of customized training provided across the state and the impacts the undertaking of customized training programs are having on local schools.

c. Systematic research should be undertaken to investigate these issues to improve the formation of state policy in the area.

5. School-business partnerships offer creative ways for the private sector to be involved with education, yet this is the most fragile type of involvement because it is so open-ended.

a. Innovative program grants should be offered to help school districts develop partnerships with the private sector and other agencies in their communities.

b. Technical assistance should be available at the state level or regional level, to help local school districts in this development.

c. Guidelines and other materials on how to get "partnership" programs started, as well as exemplary school-business partnership projects, should be compiled and distributed state-wide.

d. State-wide conferences should be held to allow participants in successful projects to share ideas and suggestions.

6. Councils and other types of policy forums that encourage or mandate the participation of representatives from education and the private sector need strong leadership to motivate and maintain interest from the private sector. Oftentimes educators — and other public sector representatives -- see participation on such councils as more germane to their jobs and interests. Defining, organizing, and conducting meetings in business-like fashion are vital in keeping active business participation. Being realistic about the amount of time private sector people are willing to commit is also important.

a. Quality staff support should be available to help structure private sector participation.

b. It should be understood that planning councils provide a community forum to build agreements and to network between key interests.

c. Training and technical assistance should be provided to executive directors and boards of joint planning and coordinating councils to encourage system building.

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